

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 15926 050344Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----072913 050352Z /15
R 050255Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5688

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15926

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SNAR, ENGR, ETRD, TH
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO THAILAND: FOLLOW-UP

REF: STATE 132442

1. FOLLOWING EMBASSY COMMENTS ARE IN RESPONSE TO ITEMS DISCUSSED IN REFTEL AND THE VARIOUS ACTIONS SUGGESTED.

2. FMS: OVER THE PAST YEAR, EMBASSY REPEATEDLY HAS DISCOURAGED RTG OVERTURES RE ADDITIONAL FMS CREDITS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PAINT AS REALISTIC A PICTURE AS WE CAN IN DISCUSSING THIS MATTER WITH RTG OFFICIALS AND THEY ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT ANY INCREASE IN FY 79 LEVEL. HOWEVER, VICE PRESIDENT'S OVERALL COMMENTS AND INDICATION THAT WE WOULD DO OUR BEST TO INCREASE FMS LEVELS IN OUT YEARS APPEAR MORE ENCOURAGING THAN POSITION STATED REFTEL AND IS PROBABLY SO REGARDED BY SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS. THEY CERTAINLY DO NOT EXPECT A DECREASE. -- WE FELT MR. ABRAMOWITZ'S ANSWER ON THE QUESTION OF SOFTER TERMS WAS CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL. WE WOULD INTEND TO BE EQUALLY NEGATIVE IF THE SUBJECT IS RAISED AGAIN. BETTER PRICES AND SHORTER DELIVERY TIMES ARE THEMES ON WHICH THE THAI MILITARY CONSTANTLY HARP. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE SUPPORTIVE OF ANY EFFORTS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THESE AREAS BUT WE RECOGNIZE THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 15926 050344Z

UNLIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED. WE BELIEVE THE THAI REALIZE THIS ALSO BUT THEY WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO ASK.

-- WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT KRIANGSAK OR ANY OTHER SENIOR RTG OFFICIAL FEELS THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE MONDALE VISIT, IT WILL BE UNNECESSARY FOR THAILAND TO LOOK FOR ALTERNATE SOURCES OF SUPPLY OR THAT THE

U.S. WILL PROVIDE "ANYTHING AND ALL" UNDER FMS. ANY SUCH FALSE HOPES WOULD CERTAINLY BE DASHED AS WE CONTINUE TO REJECT THEIR REQUESTS FOR P AND B DATA ON U.S. DEFENSE ITEMS. FURTHER, THAI OTHER NATION PROCUREMENT IS AN EXISTING REALITY WHICH WILL CONTINUE. RECENT RTG DECISIONS TO PURCHASE THIRD COUNTRY EQUIPMENT AND TO SEND SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS ON SHOPPING EXCURSIONS IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA ARE CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THIS.

3. F-5 SQUADRON: P AND B DATA ON THE F-5S HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THE RTG, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN OR IF REQUEST FOR LOA WILL BE FORTHCOMING. THE RTAF PRESENTLY IS LOOKING VERY CLOSELY AT THE AERMACCHI MB 326K AND MB 339 TO SUPPLEMENT/REPLACE THEIR AGING T-28S FOR AIR-TO-GROUND MISSION. ALTHOUGH AERMACCHI AIRCRAFT ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR F-5S, THE SECOND SQUADRON OF F-5S WAS TO BE DEDICATED PRIMARILY TO AIR-TO-GROUND USE AND SECONDARILY TO AIR-TO-AIR. THE \$108 MILLION PRICE TAG ON THE F-5S, SOMEWHAT ABOVE THE EARLIER INFORMAL ESTIMATES OF \$90 MILLION, MAY CAUSE THE THAI TO AT LEAST DEFER THEIR DECISION ON F-5S. WE UNDERSTAND THEY CAN OBTAIN TWO AERMACCHI SQUADRONS, ONE MB 326K AND ONE MB 339, FOR ABOUT \$80 MILLION.

4. ICS: GENERAL LEK'S INJECTION OF ICS INTO THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 15926 050344Z

TALKS WAS, WE BELIEVE, SPONTANEOUS ON HIS PART. IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE LEVEL OF THESE DISCUSSIONS AND, AS THE AMBASSADOR INDICATED, ANY PROBLEMS WITH ICS CAN BE HALDND AT THE WORKING LEVEL. (FYI: THE ICS AGREEMENT, WHICH PROVIDES THE EQUIPMENT TO THE RTG ON BAILMENT, EXPIRES IN JANUARY, 1980. THE RTG WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF THE AGREEMENT CAN BE EXTENDED OR IF THE EQUIPMENT WILL BE DECLARED EXCESS.) LEK DID NOT RPT NOT MEAN TO REFER TO AIT, A SUBJECT ON WHICH HE IS ALSO CONVERSANT AND HOLDS STRONG VIEWS.

5. KRIANGSAK'S VISIT TO U.S.: WE WOULD ONLY NOTE THAT INVITATION WAS NOT SIMPLY FOR 1979, BUT FOR EARLY 1979. WE DOUBT THERE WILL BE IMMEDIATE PRESSURE FOR SETTING DATES BUT WE CAN EXPECT OVERTURES TO ESTABLISH MORE PRECISE DATE FOR VISIT IN NEXT FEW MONTHS. IN ADDITION, WOULD NOTE THAT MOST LIKELY DATE OF ELECTIONS IS APRIL, 1979, THE LATEST DATE PROVIDED FOR UNDER THE CURRENT INTERIM CONSTITUTION.

6. NARCOTICS: EMBASSY AGREES FULLY WITH SUGGESTIONS

RE MAE CHAEM WATERSHED PROJECT AND HELICOPTERS.

7. ENERGY: VISIT OF ENERGY TEAM IN RESPONSE TO VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFER WILL BE ADDRESSED SEPTTEL.

8. TRADE DEFICIT: WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE THAI HAVE ANY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING U.S. TRADE DEFICIT WITH JAPAN. KRIANGSAK'S REMARKS WERE PROBABLY REFLECTIVE OF THAILAND'S OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH JAPAN. THE THAI RUN A BIG TRADE DEFICIT AND THE THAI REMAIN SUSPICIOUS OF THE JAPANESE AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE CONVINCING DEMONSTRATION OF JAPANESE INTEREST AND COMMITMENT IN THE AREA. KRIANGSAK'S REMARKS IN THIS REGARD SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TOO MUCH WEIGHT, ALTHOUGH WE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 15926 050344Z

WILL, OF COURSE, BE RECEPTIVE TO ANY USEFUL SUGGESTIONS THE THAI MAY COME UP WITH.

9. JAPANESE AID: IT IS TOO EARLY TO EVALUATE THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF GOJ "UNTYING" ITS AID. PRESENTLY, WE BELIEVE THE THAI ARE SKEPTICAL THAT IT WILL SIGNAL ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN PROCUREMENT PATTERNS. WE HAVE NOT, HOWEVER, DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT IN DETAIL WITH THE RTG. WE PLAN TO DO THIS AND WILL REPORT RTG REACTIONS/COMMENTS.

10. AID RELATED SUBJECTS DISCUSSED OUTSIDE OF VICE PRESIDENT/PRIME MINISTER MEETING BETWEEN US AND RTG OFFICIALS WILL BE ADDRESSED SEPTTEL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VICE PRESIDENT, VISITS, BRIEFING MATERIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO15926
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780233-1103
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780698/aaaadgbc.tel
Line Count: 151
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e335be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 132442
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2496198
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VICE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO THAILAND: FOLLOW-UP
TAGS: MASS, SNAR, ENRG, ETRD, TH, (MONDALE, WALTER F)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e335be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014